



Ambassador John Berry – Herald Sun article

**Herald Sun article:
US ambassador's emotional
MCG pilgrimage**

As reported by Herald Sun, April 11, 2014

Prior to his appointment in September, America's new Ambassador in Canberra was asked by President Barack Obama to name the job that topped his wish list.

"Australia," John Berry replied.

When former Governor-General Quentin Bryce accepted his credentials last year, and the national anthems of both countries played, Ambassador Berry readily admits he shed a tear and thought of his father.

The seeds for his desire for an Australian posting were sown by the late Morrell 'Moe' Berry who, together with his battle-weary US Marine comrades, found refuge in Melbourne from the horrors of war some 70 years ago.

In the decades following World War II, Mr Berry snr spoke to his son affectionately of Australia and the people who helped those exhausted Marines regain a sense of hope and future.

This week, Ambassador Berry made an emotional visit to the MCG where his father and 3600 other US troops camped for some much-needed R & R following the bloody 1942-43 campaign at Guadalcanal which gave the Allies their first toehold against the Japanese, just 2100km from the Australian mainland.

"I grew up learning about Australia from my father," Mr Berry said.

Moe Berry was 18 when he landed on Guadalcanal as part of Operation Watchtower.

The troops faced untold horror and endured six months of infrequent supplies as they took the island in bitter fighting.

"They had to do things and see things that no 18-year-old should have to see or do," the Ambassador said.

"The 1st Division were the first ones sent into Guadalcanal ... they were dropped off and told to 'hold this rock'. The Japanese knew how important this battle was."

Mr Berry said the experience left many Marines shocked and numbed.



Ambassador John Berry – Herald Sun article

“You really wondered whether there was any good left in the world,” he said of the retelling his father gave.

But when the troops were finally afforded rest in Melbourne in 1943, quartered at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, the reception they received from Victorians lifted spirits and helped remind them why they fought so hard.

Upon arrival, the Americans were greeted by the sounds of Waltzing Matilda, which the 1st Division Marines have ever-since adopted as their battle hymn.

“It was the sweetest sound any Marine has ever heard ... it’s their battle song, their touchstone,” Mr Berry said of the Matilda reception.

“Within two weeks, the Australians were so warm-hearted, so generous, so kind and so good that it reminded you that there was good left in the world and that it was damn worth fighting for,” Mr Berry said.

Mr Berry senior went on to fight in Papua New Guinea and always spoke fondly of Australia, ready to buy anyone with an Australian accent a beer.

Moe’s brother John, whom the Ambassador is named after, was later shot down and killed during a sortie above Mindanao in the Philippines.

Mr Berry snr died aged 87 but Ambassador Berry said his father would have been touched by his posting as the US’s top diplomat in Australia last September.

[Link to article in Herald Sun.](#)